



Tagine. And oh yes, incidentally, stock. And couscous.



Chaz

 [cvillette](https://cvillette.livejournal.com/)

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MOOD: 😊 cheerful

MUSIC: Thea Gilmore - December in New York

Mom gave me the time off.

And Tasha used the phone number. So I have a date tomorrow night, and I have to be on a plane very early Saturday morning. And since I have decided that my secret weapon in the marketplace is to be the guy girls date because he feeds them so well, tonight I am making tagine so I can just reheat it tomorrow.

Besides, I have a new 'sensitive cheap! on sale! pan I want to play with.

Tagine is a kind of Moroccan braise, and really, you can put anything in it at all. Chicken, lamb. Usually it has dried fruit and fresh vegetables. You could make it vegetarian too. Traditionally it's cooked in a funny-looking pot called a tagine (<https://www.livejournal.com/away?to=http%3A/www.tagines.com/>) (shocking!) but you can do it in a dutch oven or ovenproof stew pot or anything you can cook a braise in.

A braise is when you take the things you are cooking, brown them, and then let them simmer slowly under constant heat in a sealed container for a very long time, until all the connective tissue dissolves and you are left with a wonderful, flavorful, oleaginous pot-roasty/oven-stew/lamb-shank kind of one-pot meal.

This is a lamb tagine with olives and preserved lemon, exotic and unusual and when I make it it makes my entire floor smell so good that my neighbors wander up and down the hall, sniffing at doorways, trying to find out where the fabulous smell is coming from.

Okay, first you take some of that chicken stock you made from the leftover bones from the chicken you roasted. This is how you do it:

Everytime you eat chicken with bones, take the leftover sucked-clean bones and put them in a ziplock in the freezer. When the ziplock is full, you take all the bones out, put them in a soup pot, cover them with water, and put them on the back of the stove on medium-low and you go away and play World of Warcraft until 2/3rds of the water has simmered off. And what is left in the pot, once you have strained out the bones, is chicken stock. If you add salt to it, it might be chicken broth, and you can drink it. You can de-fat it in your defatting cup, save the fat in a leftover deli tub for schmaltz, and put the chicken stock in plastic bags or other deli containers for freezing. It will keep in the freezer for a long time. (You can use this process to make any kind of dead animal stock, though if you are using bones from mammals, it is best to brown them in the oven first, because they will taste better.)

You could put carrots and onions and celery and herbs in it, too, but since it is an ingredient and you are going to season whatever you cook with it, that might not be worth your time.

Good. Now you have rather a lot of nice chicken stock! You are ready to take over the world.

Failure modes:

Boiling the pot dry. Contrarindicated, Raggy!

On to the tagine!

Tagine:

- 2-3 tbsp argan oil. Since you probably can't find argan oil, get yourself avocado oil instead. It has a much higher smoke point than olive oil, is heart-friendly, and tastes good. If you are using the avocado oil, walnut oil is nice for dressing at the end, to give a nutty flavor, but it burns too easily to use as the cooking oil in this dish.
- 1 diced red onion
- 3-7 diced garlic cloves (I like garlic. More is better.)
- sea salt to taste
- tagine spice mix (see below)
- Saffron
- 1 can of tomatoes (or fresh tomatoes in season)
- 1/4 cup dried fruit (raisins, apricots, whatever), chopped (you do not have to chop raisins!)

- 1/4 cup nuts (almonds, walnuts, whatever), chopped
- 1/2 cup good olives, pitted and chopped
- 1 salt-preserved Moroccan lemon (fresh lemon will not do what you need in this dish. Whole Paycheck has the preserved lemons, and so will Middle Eastern groceries), chopped
- 2 pints of stock
- 1-2 pounds of lamb or chicken
- chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, because curly parsley is of the devil
- some kind of vegetable (broccoli, carrots, peas, whatever)

The spice mix:

- 1 part cayenne
- 1 part freshly-cracked black pepper. (This is what to use the mortar and pestle you stole from 7th grade science class for, finally.)
- 2 parts good sweet paprika (most supermarket paprika tastes like nothing, except faintly bitter. Spare yourself. Get real paprika from a spice merchant.)
- 2 parts good powdered ginger
- 1 part turmeric
- 2 parts cinnamon

Mix all this together and put it in a little jar. It's probably enough for two batches of tagine, depending.

Okay. take your lamb (or chicken, or tofu, or whatever) and coat it liberally in the spice powder. Stick it in the fridge in a bowl and go away for eight hours or so, give or take. Come back and take it out and allow it to come up to cool room temperature, 60 degrees or so.

Start heating argan or avocado oil over medium heat in your oven-safe pan, which needs to be deep enough to hold a quart or two. When your oil is hot enough to shimmer, begin laying the meat in it to brown.

Do not move the browning meat around in the pan. You want it to develop a nice crispy caramelized crust, because this is how it develops flavor, and the flavor of the meat is the foundation of your meat-based foodstuff, especially if it is braised. Like a stew. Or a tagine.

You can use any kind of lamb for this, including lamb chops or old

stew meat that has been getting burned in the freezer, but a nice shoulder or shank works well. Cheap is fine. Cheap meat has a lot of connective tissue, and braising turns that stuff into lovely silky gelatin, which makes the whole dish wonderful.

Just wait until the meat has crusted, and then turn it over and let it crust on the other side. Don't poke it while it's browning. It's a sign of insecurity, and you'll just destroy the developing relationship. (Also, for the record, when making hamburgers, do not press down on the frying or grilling burger with the flat of the spatula, unless you really want to press the juice out of the meat and make it dry and tough.)

(The shiny new pan, for the record, browns stuff gorgeously.)

Okay, once you have browned the meat, dump the diced onions and garlic in on top and give it a stir. Go away and take the pits out of your olives, chop up the lemon, or something. Every five minutes, come back and stir the stuff in the pan around. When the onions are turning golden and translucent, add the stock and the can of tomatoes, add the saffron, turn the heat down to medium low, cover it tight, and go away. Alternately, you can put the covered pan in the oven, if it is oven-safe.

Come back in an hour or two and check on the tagine.

When the meat literally shreds when you touch it, it's nearly ready. Add the vegetables, the dried fruit and nuts, and the olives and preserved lemon.

Let the vegetables cook, and check the strength and consistency of the broth. If it's not strong enough, remove all the food and put it on a platter, covered to stay warm. Then put the Dutch oven back on the burner and let the fluid boil down and concentrate until it tastes right. You may correct the seasoning at this point, with more salt, or more tagine spices, or whatever. Pour the sauce over the tagine, add the chopped parsley or cilantro, and declare it good..

Make couscous while you are reducing and correcting the sauce. (Follow the directions on the box. If you soak couscous in cold water before you steam it, it comes out fluffier. Or you can boil it in more chicken stock, to get more flavorful couscous.)

Serve the whole mess, and be happy.

Failure modes:

Boiling the pot dry, again. Still contraindicated.

Too much spice.

Not enough spice.


You can leave out the nuts and the fruit just fine, and you might want to, first time out, to get a feel for the flavors, because they are complex enough without the additions. Though the additions are nice. Tagine is like stew: you don't need a recipe. Just experience and a little faith.

Too hot and in a hurry. Patience! Patience! Everything is better if you do it slowly.

Well, nearly always, anyway.

She'll never believe I actually cooked it, of course, and didn't just order takeout and then put it in my pretentious pan.

But that's okay.

( [trollcatz \(https://trollcatz.livejournal.com/\)](https://trollcatz.livejournal.com/)_, she's not coming over until eightish. Wall before?)

TAGS: [recipes](#)



[locked] [Dream Journal](#)

All right, unconscious mind. We're coming to an accommodation. If the dreams are you cleaning

[Elvis doesn't live here anymore.](#)

Hey there. Sorry about the drama. It was... it was an emotional decision, and I didn't

[Poppets. Puppets. Poppet puppets. Scary.](#)

10 comments



 [trollcatz](#)

[December 21 2007, 06:37:55 UTC](#)

[COLLAPSE](#)

You are a climbin' fool. Wall most definitely--I gotta get some time in before V'mont.

And if we meet Tasha at the gym, I'm gonna laugh on account of I will find it funny. Maybe no one else would.



 cvillette

December 21 2007, 06:50:33 UTC COLLAPSE

What, my wingman helping me pick up girls? What's wrong with that?

It's traditional! It's even in the cow commercials!



 cvillette

December 21 2007, 07:03:47 UTC COLLAPSE

(Seriously, it's just a date. For fun. I have no hopes and no agenda.)



 trollcatz

December 21 2007, 07:38:59 UTC COLLAPSE

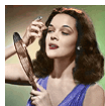
Hee! It's just the possibility that you might both decide that the way to prep for a date is to go spend an hour or two dragging yourselves up a surface in defiance of gravity... I like climbers. They're crazy. They remind me of you. (Oh, wait--they ARE you! You are THEY!)



 cvillette

December 21 2007, 13:19:32 UTC COLLAPSE

And now, you are they also!



 Ometotchtli

December 21 2007, 17:01:00 UTC COLLAPSE

And so is Charlie:

http://dailycoyote.blogspot.com/2007/12/notes-on-charlie_2703.html



 trollcatz

December 21 2007, 07:41:30 UTC COLLAPSE

So why is the pan shaped like that? A shallow dish with a tall pointy lid like a wizard's hat?




 cvillette

December 21 2007, 13:26:02 UTC COLLAPSE

Watson, I deduce that the shape of the oven dates back to cooking over an open fire in clay vessels. The oven goes on the coals; the food goes in the oven; the lid goes on the food; the coals get raked up around the base of the oven to keep it hot; then the cook goes away for a while and does other needful household tasks.

When suppertime arrives, the coals get raked away, and the lid is lifted off by the sticky-uppy part, which has remained cool to the touch.

That is, however, as I said, a speculation, and only additional research may prove the hypothesis!


 [arcaedia](#)

December 22 2007, 14:41:51 UTC

COLLAPSE

Tried your tagine. It was delish. Looking forward to many more recipes and food experiments. Hope you enjoy my cooking blog too. :)



 [cvillette](#)

December 22 2007, 14:49:11 UTC

COLLAPSE

Excellent! I am glad it worked. It's a mashup of several recipes--originally, the lemon and olive one was for chicken, but I wanted lamb.

Next time I want to try it in a crock pot with a lamb shank so the meat is in big chunks rather than chili-like shreds, which is what I got this time.

[locked] Dream Journal

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